



# **FIRE IN THE GARDEN**

Choral music  
about  
climate  
change

A livestreamed concert directed by Dr. Allegra Martin

**December 12, 2021, 8:00pm**

**Available until January 12, 2022**

Information: [www.cantilena.org/concerts](http://www.cantilena.org/concerts)



**Cantilena**  
A WOMEN'S CHORALE

## Cantilena: About Us

Cantilena, a women's chorale, is an approximately 30-voice ensemble dedicated to performing music written for the treble voice. Our challenging and diverse repertoire spans the fifteenth to twenty-first centuries and includes works in many different languages and musical forms. We strive to introduce both our members and our audience to works they are unlikely to encounter in other forums, with an emphasis on music composed specifically for treble voices.

Cantilena was founded in 1968 as the Cambridge Chorale, an ensemble of mixed (SATB) voices. In 1980, the group became a women's chorus and, in 2000, we changed our name to Cantilena.

Cantilena is a member of the Greater Boston Choral Consortium, a cooperative association of diverse choral groups in Boston and the surrounding areas.

## Cantilena Singers

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Al Clancy	Isun Malekghassemi
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Allegra Martin

## Collaborative Pianist

Kelvyn Koning

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**Our Spring 2022 semester  
starts in January 2022!**

**Interested in singing with us?**

**Find more information at**  
[www.cantilena.org/audition](http://www.cantilena.org/audition)

GREATER  
BOSTON  
CHORAL  
CONSORTIUM

December 12, 2021

# Fire in the Garden

Choral music about climate change

*Allegra Martin*

*Musical Director*

*Kelvyn Koning*

*Collaborative Pianist*

**Greta Sails**

Moira Smiley

Text by Moira Smiley

*Soloists: Ashley Brueske, Mollie Davis,  
and Mara Moldwin*

*Dance leader: Isun Malekghassemi*

**The Birds' Lullaby**

Sarah Quartel

Text by E. Pauline Johnson

*Small ensemble: Ashley Brueske,  
Jaime Church, Al Clancy, Mollie Davis,  
Lindsay Garrard, Joan Grisham,  
Beverly Hjorth, Isun Malekghassemi,  
Mara Moldwin, Gina Sonder,  
Jeanne Sparrow, Carol Tong*

**Spring, the Sweet Spring**

Ēriks Ešenvalds

Text by Thomas Nashe

*Soloists: Ashley Brueske, Mollie Davis, and  
Isun Malekghassemi*

*Wine glasses: Mollie Davis, Lindsay Garrard,  
Joan Grisham, Erin Maloney, Patricia Pepper*

**Mountain Nights I**

**(Songs Without Words for Women's Voices)**

Zoltán Kodály

*Soloist: Jaime Church*

**Daffodils**

Kenneth Seitz

Text by William Wordsworth

**The Blue Eye of God**

Nancy Telfer

Text by Barbara Powis

**Fire in the Garden:  
A Climate Change Trilogy\***

Giselle Wyers

Text: Greta Thunberg,  
Denise Levertov, the Bible,  
Barbara Deming, and  
Hildegard von Bingen

**I. Our House is On Fire**

**II. Who Can Utter?**

**III. Prayer for the Earth**

**The Peace of Wild Things**

Joan Szymko

Text by Wendell Berry

*Soloist: Ashley Brueske*

\*This commissioned work was partially supported  
by a grant from Mass Cultural Council  
([www.massculturalcouncil.org](http://www.massculturalcouncil.org))

## Allegra Martin: Music Director for Fall 2021



Cantilena is delighted that our dear friend and past artistic director Allegra Martin returned as Interim Music Director this Fall 2021.

Dr. Allegra Martin is the Director of College Choirs at Holy Cross. During the 2020-2021 academic year she also served as the Interim Orchestra Director. Previous positions have included Director of Music at First Parish Cohasset, Artistic Director of the Cantilena Women's Chorale, Chorus Director at Lasell College, and a Choral Artist with the Urban Voices Program of the Metropolitan Opera Guild. Dr. Martin holds degrees from Williams College and Westminster Choir College, and a doctorate from the University of Illinois. At the University of Illinois, she founded and conducted the University Mixed Chorus. Her research specialty is the choral music of Margaret Bonds. She presented on the topic of diversity in programming at the online Oxford University Conducting Institute in June 2021.

Dr. Martin is also an active professional singer, and was one of the founders of Anthology, a women's vocal quartet that performed in the greater Boston area for six years and commissioned 22 works of new music in that time. She currently sings with the Schola Cantorum of Boston and in the past has sung with such ensembles as Cappella Clausura, and the Video Game Orchestra. While at the University of Illinois, she performed Julia Wolfe's award-winning *Anthracite Fields* with Bang on a Can and Vivaldi's *Juditha Triumphans* with the Venice Baroque Orchestra. While at Westminster, she sang with the New York Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra, as well as in opera productions at the U.S. Spoleto Festival. In the summer of 2016 she performed in Britten's *War Requiem* with Kent Nagano and the Montreal Symphony Orchestra.

## Kelvyn Koning: Collaborative Pianist



Cantilena is thrilled to welcome Kelvyn Koning as our new collaborative pianist, starting in the Fall semester of 2021.

Kelvyn Koning (he/they) specializes in composing for choir and theatre and performing as a countertenor and pianist. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Composition from Calvin University in Grand Rapids, MI and a Master of Music in Composition from the Boston Conservatory at Berklee. Kelvyn has been commissioned to write pieces for Boston Latin School, Zeeland HS, Batesville HS, the Da Camera Singers, Quorum, and the Oriana Consort. His latest works include two full-length musicals, *The Glassblower's Daughter* at the Regent Theater in Arlington, MA, and *The Prince and the Painter* with Moonbox Productions.

Kelvyn is a founding member of the Nightingale Vocal Ensemble, for whom he sings and composes music, and has also sung with the Calvin Alumni Choir, Quorum, and the Oriana Consort. He performed as a soloist at the Beaver Island Baroque Festival in his home state of Michigan and has premiered several new vocal and piano works by his friends in Boston. Kelvyn accompanies voice lessons, choirs, and musical theatre at Boston Latin School and Boston Conservatory and plays piano as a soloist and accompanist around Boston. During the COVID era, he was challenged to record music weekly - a vulnerable and enriching experience - and to compose children's musicals and choral music regularly from his studio. Kelvyn's vision is to foster empathy, healing, and social justice for individuals and communities through music.



## Program Notes

We are very excited to finally be presenting the world premiere of *Fire in the Garden* today and we are so happy you have joined us for this occasion. *Fire in the Garden* is a Climate Change Trilogy, a work in three movements about the frightening challenge of global warming that is currently facing the planet and its inhabitants. The idea for this commission came from Cantilena's previous director, Jennifer Kane, who first connected with composer Giselle Wyers at an American Choral Directors Association convention. The planned premiere in the spring of 2020 had to be delayed because of the pandemic, but we are happy to finally be sharing this beautiful and important work with you, one and a half years later.

We have surrounded *Fire in the Garden* with other works about climate change, environmentalism, and the beauty and central importance to humans of the natural world. We start with a work inspired by Greta Thunberg, the famous teenage environmental activist who has been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize every year since she turned 16 (she is 18 now.) Moira Smiley, an LA-based composer known for her tuneful, folk-inspired performances and compositions, wrote a challenging and complex piece with many interlocking pieces. The complex body percussion pushes us outside our comfort zone and challenges us in the same way that an effective response to climate change will also push us outside our comfort zone and challenge us to stand up to the institutions driving global warming!

Our next set of pieces is about the beauty of nature. *The Birds' Lullaby* by Sarah Quartel, a Canadian composer, sets the words of a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canadian poet of both Mohawk and English heritage, E. Pauline Johnson. This piece is utterly charming and beautiful; listen for Quartel's use of syncopation on the words "sing" and "swing" in the chorus; you can hear the tree boughs swaying! Latvian composer Ēriks Ešņvalds also writes about birds in *Spring, the Sweet Spring*, and employs one of his favorite instruments, tuned wine glasses. Famous Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály was also a famous pedagogue – he created the Kodály method of music education which is currently used all over the world. His moody piece *Mountain Nights* evokes both the creepiness and the sense of freedom that comes from a night walk in the mountains. And finally, we have the poetry of William Wordsworth, set by Cantilena director emeritus and composer Kenneth Seitz. This is only one of the many wonderful works Ken has written for Cantilena over the years. In this piece, the chorus acts as the poet, and the piano, which has a very independent part from the singers, takes on the character of the swaying, shimmering daffodils.

We then move on to *The Blue Eye of God*, a work grieving the destruction of our oceans. Both the composer Nancy Telfer and the poet Barbara Powis are Canadian. Telfer makes use of spoken and whispered text, as well as a center section where repeated patterns in the voices create a sense of repetitive wave-like motion that leads to a sense of otherworldliness. Then comes our centerpiece, the world premiere of *Fire in the Garden: A Climate Change Trilogy*; and we will end with American composer Joan Szymko's romantic and impassioned setting of Wendell Berry's poem *The Peace of Wild Things*.

The centerpiece of our concert is of course our premiere of *Fire in the Garden: A Climate Change Trilogy* by Giselle Wyers. Wyers provided the following notes on her piece:

*"Fire in the Garden: A Climate Change Trilogy" was completed shortly before the pandemic began. It intends to provide a "listening space" to reflect on the climate crisis, and the real threat it poses to all living creatures, including one another. We have all read the headlines and heard the terms "1.5 degrees Celsius," but my piece seeks to cut through politics and take a more personal look at how we feel when we think about the terrifying prospect of global warming. Each movement poses a different question or emotion for us to grapple with. Greta Thunberg's words in Movement 1 "Our House is On Fire" pose an urgent call to confront the real threat and take action so that—in her words—"then and only then will hope come." Movement 2, Denise Levertov's "Who can Utter," offers a painful yet intimate admission of humankind's role and asks, using words from the Bible, "for if we do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry"? This question remains unanswered, but comfort is offered in Movement 3, "Prayer for the Earth," with text from the 12th century female mystic Hildegard of Bingen woven within a modern humanist "prayer" by Barbara Deming.*

*As a composer, I have composed works about many social issues including houselessness, gun violence, and the Flint water crisis, but this work in particular has allowed me to reflect in a very personal way on an issue that is deeply concerning. It is my hope that the music will offer a direct route for all of us to face our fears and despair around the climate crisis, ultimately emerging with a heightened sense of responsibility and belief that our actions will make a difference.*

Thank you for joining us tonight! As Smiley says, "We can make it better when we stand up!" and we hope this program will inspire you to take one more step along the path of climate change activism so that we can all enjoy "the peace of wild things" forever.

**Allegra Martin**

## Composer biography: Giselle Wyers



Giselle Wyers is Professor of Choral Studies and Voice at the University of Washington, where she conducts the University Chorale and teaches courses in choral conducting and choral music education. In addition to Wyers' active schedule as a guest conductor in the United States, Canada, and Europe, she has composed over 30 choral works, often on themes related to the environment. Commissions for her music have been wide ranging, including works for European and American community, college and high school choruses. Her latest project, *Join in Gathering*, is commissioned by the Greater Seattle Choral Consortium and Consortio and will be sung live by a plethora of community choruses at their Seattle Sings Festival in March 2022. Learn more by listening to interviews with Wyers on the podcasts Movable Do, Choralosophy, Choir Chat, and ArtTap.

Wyers has published an international award-winning setting of *Ave Maria* through earthsongs publications. Her work has enjoyed professional recordings by choruses such as Choral Arts NW, Oregon Repertory Singers and Canticum Chamber Choir of Australia.

Recent compositions include the 30-minute choral cycle *And All Shall Be Well* for chorus, string quartet and piano on the theme of legacy and remembrance, commissioned by Vashon Island Chorale, *A Roof and a Bed* on the theme of houselessness, commissioned by Portland Lesbian Choir, and *Continue*, a retirement celebration piece for wind ensemble and choir commissioned by Port Angeles High School Music Program. Learn more at [gisellewyers.com](http://gisellewyers.com), or by listening to interviews with Wyers on the podcasts Movable Do, Choralosophy, Choir Chat, and ArtTap.

Watch or listen to  
Allegra Martin's conversation with Giselle Wyers  
about the creative process behind  
*Fire in the Garden: A Climate Change Trilogy*

[https://bit.ly/Cantilena\\_2021\\_Interview](https://bit.ly/Cantilena_2021_Interview)

([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRuUzLabR\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRuUzLabR_g))



## Texts and translations

### Greta Sails

*Words and Music: Moira Smiley*

Readings:

1. Famous biologist Rachel Carson wrote:

"Our attitude toward nature is today critically important simply because we have now acquired a fateful power to alter and destroy nature.

2. But we are a part of nature and our war against nature is inevitably a war against ourselves. We, in this generation, must come to terms with nature.

3. We're challenged as humankind has never been challenged before to prove our maturity and our mastery, not of nature, but of ourselves."

Ha oo ah...

Wind in my lungs, wind in my lungs,  
Wind in my lungs, wind in my lungs,  
Pull the sail up, ready, pull the sail up!  
Ready, pull the sail up ready, pull the sail up!  
We sail into tomorrow, sail into tomorrow.  
The world is full of ev'ry, full of ev'ry,  
full of ev'ry sorrow, full of ev'ry sorrow...

I see the seven generations looking back this way,  
seven generations looking back this way...

My daughter tells me the future's in my hands,  
My granddaughter says the future's in my hands,  
My great grandson remembers my hands.

My daughter tells me the future's in my hands,  
My granddaughter says the future's in my hands,  
My great grandson remembers, remembers,  
remembers...

Wind in your lungs, wind in your lungs,  
We can make it better when we stand up!  
We can make it better when we stand up!  
Stand for tomorrow, oo, stand for tomorrow.  
The world is full of only, full of only time that we borrow,  
full of only time that we borrow...

I see the seven generations looking back this way,  
I see the seven generations looking...  
I see the seven generations looking back this way.

I stand up for the child in me,  
I stand up for the grandchild in me,  
I stand up for the great grandchild,  
I stand up for the great great grand-child...

And she reminds us the future's in our hands,  
in our hands, in our hands.

### The Birds' Lullaby

*Sarah Quartel*

*Text: E. Pauline Johnson*

Sing to us, cedars; the twilight is creeping  
With shadowy garments, the wilderness through;  
All day we have carolled, and now would be sleeping,  
So echo the anthems we warbled to you;  
While we swing, swing,  
And your branches sing,  
And we drowse to your dreamy whispering.

Sing to us, cedars; the night-wind is sighing,  
Is wooing, is pleading, to hear you reply;  
And here in your arms we are restfully lying,  
And longing to dream to your soft lullaby;  
While we swing, swing,  
And your branches sing,  
And we drowse to your dreamy whispering.

Sing to us, cedars; your voice is so lowly,  
Your breathing so fragrant, your branches so strong;  
Our little nest-cradles are swaying so slowly,  
While zephyrs are breathing their slumberous song.  
And we swing, swing,  
While your branches sing,  
And we drowse to your dreamy whispering.

## **Spring, the Sweet Spring**

*Eriks Ešenvalds*

*Text: Thomas Nashe*

Spring, the sweet spring,  
Is the year's pleasant king,  
Then blooms each thing,  
Then maids dance in a ring,  
And cold doth not sting,  
The pretty birds do sing

The palm and may  
Make country houses gay,  
Lambs frisk and play,  
The shepherds pipe all day,  
And we hear aye  
Birds tune this merry lay

The fields breathe sweet,  
The daisies kiss our feet,  
Young lovers meet,  
Old wives a-sunning sit,  
In every street  
These tunes our ears do greet

## **Daffodils**

*Kenneth Seitz*

*Text: William Wordsworth*

I wander'd lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils,  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the Milky Way,  
They stretch'd in neverending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they  
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee:  
A Poet could not but be gay  
In such a jocund company!  
I gazed, and gazed,  
but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

## **The Blue Eye of God**

*Nancy Telfer*

*Text: Barbara Powis*

The animals, the winged and swimming  
creatures  
rose in their agony, confronted man.  
(Dolphin, dolphin, dolphin...)  
Dolphins, dolphins, butchered on beaches,  
sea tears brimming startled eyes,  
observed an arc of knives... obscure the sun.

Ducks and long-limbed herons  
raise their jewelled wings,  
(Heron, heron, heron...)  
their bright and patterned necks, and sank,  
oil-girdled in the black and tarnished sea.

The humpback whales, the orcas wrote  
Cetacean history.  
Their underwater songs rang plunder...  
the scraped dead space behind the factory  
ships;  
Their underwater songs sang of mysteries  
greater than man, greater than whales:  
the blue eye of God...in the water.

(The animals, the winged and swimming  
creatures...)

## **Fire in the Garden: A Climate Change Trilogy**

*Giselle Wyers*

### **I. Our House is On Fire**

*Text: Greta Thunberg*

Our house is on fire,  
I am here to say our house is on fire.  
According to the science  
we are less than twelve years away  
from not being able to undo our mistakes.

For 25 years countless of people  
have asked our nation's leaders  
to stop the emissions.  
But clearly this has not worked  
since the emissions just continue to rise.

We are facing an existential threat  
there is no time  
to continue down this road of madness.

I ask the people around the world to realize  
Our leaders have failed us.  
We are in the midst of the sixth mass  
extinction,

Two hundred species going extinct  
every single day.

You would think the media would talk of  
nothing else  
but no one ever even mentions it.

But homo sapiens have not yet failed.  
Yes we are failing...  
but there is still time to turn everything  
around.  
We can still fix this  
We still have everything in our own hands.  
The climate crisis has already been solved  
We already have all the facts and solutions

We have come here to let the leaders know  
that change is coming whether they like it or  
not

The people will rise to the challenge  
and since our leaders are behaving like  
children,  
we will have to take the responsibility  
they should have taken long ago.

And yes, we do need hope, of course we do.  
But the one thing we need more than hope  
is action.

Once we start to act, hope is everywhere.  
So instead of looking for hope, look for  
action.

Then, and only then, hope will come.

## **II. Who Can Utter?**

*Text: Denise Levertov and the Bible*

*(Denise Levertov)*

Who can utter  
the poignance of all that is constantly  
threatened, invaded, expended

and constantly  
nevertheless  
persists in beauty,

tranquil as this young moon  
just risen and slowly  
drinking light  
from the vanished sun.

Who can utter  
the praise of such generosity  
or the shame?

*(Bible)*

For if they do these things  
when the tree is green,  
What will happen when it is dry?

## **III. A Prayer for the Earth**

*Text: Barbara Deming, Hildegard von Bingen*

*(Barbara Deming)*

Spirit of love  
That flows against our flesh  
Sets it trembling  
Moves across it as across grass  
Erasing every boundary that we accept  
And swings the doors of our lives wide—  
This is a prayer I sing:  
Save our perishing earth!

*(Hildegard von Bingen)*

O branch of freshest green, O hail!  
Within the windy gusts of saints  
Upon a quest you swayed and sprouted forth.

*(Barbara Deming)*

Spirit that hears each one of us,  
Hears all that is—  
Listens, listen(s), hear(s) us out—  
Inspire us now!  
...within the flowered ground beneath our  
feet,  
Teach us to listen!

*(Hildegard von Bingen)*

You heard, for in you seeped the sunlight's  
warmth  
Like balsam's sweet perfume  
For in you bloomed so beautiful a flower,  
whose fragrance wa'ned all the spices from  
their dried out stupor.

*(Barbara Deming)*

We can hear it in water, [hear it] in wood,  
(and) even in stone.  
We are earth of this earth, and (we are) bone  
of its bone.  
This is a prayer I sing, for we have forgotten  
this and so  
The earth is perishing.

*(Hildegard von Bingen)*

Heaven, rain your dew upon the grass!  
all the earth be cheered,  
For from earth's wound will come forth fruit  
And all the birds up in the sky will have nests  
in her.

*(Barbara Deming)*

This is a prayer I sing...

## **The Peace of Wild Things**

*Joan Szymko*

*Text: Wendell Berry*

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

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Arlington, MA 781-646-0121  
[www.cookiebakey.com](http://www.cookiebakey.com)

**Not Your Average Joe's**  
[www.NYAJ.com](http://www.NYAJ.com)

**Retro Burger & Ice Cream**  
795 Mass Ave.  
Arlington, MA  
[www.retroburger.net](http://www.retroburger.net)

**Henry Bear's Park**  
685 Mass Ave.  
Arlington, MA  
781-646-9400  
[www.henrybear.com](http://www.henrybear.com)